Original Research Article

Social Adjustment Patterns of Tribal Students: Exploring Family Dynamics

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the intricate aspects of social adjustment among Scheduled Tribe students within the secondary school environment. The study explores the influences of gender, family type, number of siblings, father's education and occupation, and familial monthly income on the social adjustment abilities of these students. Drawing from a cross-sectional survey of 193 students in West Bengal, the study reveals compelling insights. The gender-based analysis highlights that female students within the Scheduled Tribe community face more significant adjustment challenges and exhibit lower social adjustment compared to their male counterparts. The influence of family type is also substantial, with students from nuclear families encountering higher adjustment difficulties and more downward social adjustment than those from joint families. The examination of family size indicates that students with two siblings experience heightened adjustment difficulties and lower social adjustment. Furthermore, the study underscores the role of socio-economic factors, revealing correlations between the father's occupation and educational qualifications with students' social adjustment abilities. While overall differences in familial monthly income did not prove statistically significant, select pairwise comparisons showcased variations. Collectively, these findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping social adjustment among Scheduled Tribe students. The implications extend to the development of tailored interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of these students within the educational context.

Keywords: Social Adjustment; Secondary School Students; Schedule Tribe Students; Gender Differences; Family Dynamics;

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1. INTRODUCTION

Adjustment, a significant aspect of human development, is an ongoing interaction between individuals and their environment [1], aiming to establish a harmonious relationship. It is the process by which a living organism maintains equilibrium between its physical, social, and psychological needs and the external factors influencing fulfilling them [2]. It's a state that fosters happiness and efficiency within an environment as individuals strive for psychological equilibrium and self-enhancement [3]. It is how or how to adapt to a new situation [4] and can be seen as an achievement, gauging conflict resolution, and a process of compromise during conflicts [5]. Adjustment is an all-inclusive term meaning the relationship between an individual and his environment through which his needs are satisfied following social demands [Kirtania. P. (2019). Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation]. Although adjustment contains many aspects, such as social, educational, emotional, or psychological [6], and physical dimensions, the best part is social adjustment (SA), which is the prerequisite to the other aspects of adjustment [7]. As social beings, human beings need it to interact effectively with others. SA helps people face difficulties [8] and to understand social relationships well. Numerous studies highlight the significance of SA in various domains: peer relations, academics, family dynamics, happiness, and life satisfaction. The link between SA and academic success has been evidenced in Western countries and India [9,10]. Generally, sociable and prosocial children excel academically, while disruptive, aggressive individuals who perform poorly [11,12] often exhibit poor performance, withdrawal, shyness, and antisocial behavior, resulting in truancy and school absenteeism. Social withdrawal and inhibition are also tied to academic difficulties [9,10].

SA, involving interactions with parents, peers, and teachers, is pivotal in developing adaptive skills [13] and has garnered considerable attention from psychologists as a vital indicator of psychological well-being. Positive SA fosters healthy relationships, emotional well-being, and psychological health among students. As aligned with society's standards, values, and needs to gain acceptance [14], SA is a psychological process of coping with new norms and values. It is the ability to behave in a manner that fosters a healthy social life [15] and adapt to and thrive in diverse social situations. SA is a state of mind and behavior where one feels that one's needs have been or will be fulfilled [16]. The level of SA can be gauged by observing the extent to which a child displays acceptance in their relationships with other children and adults [17]. According to Packiaselvi and Malathi, SA comprises two aspects: general

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adjustment to other people and specific adjustment to a group [18]. It balances social relationships by appropriately applying social skills [19]. SA may occur by adjusting the self to the environment or changing the environment [20].

Social growth hinges on interactions with parents, peers, and teachers, reflecting oneself and others' adjustment [21]. In school, children learn to coexist and cooperate with peers and teachers from diverse backgrounds [22], boosting their SA skills, which impact their future happiness, aspirations, motivation, well-being, and achievements. Tribal students are no exception. Recognizing the importance of SA skills in school, particularly for tribal students, highlights the role of diverse backgrounds in shaping one's future. Understanding the concept of tribes is essential in appreciating how tribal students learn to coexist in various school environments. Now, let's delve into the definition and characteristics of tribes as described by experts. According to D.N. Majumdar, a tribe comprises families sharing a common name, territory, language, and specific marriage and occupation taboos (Majumdar, D.N. (1961): Races and Cultures of India, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, p. 367). They have an interchange and mutual obligations system and typically maintain an endogamous structure with political organization within their society. Tribal people, mainly indigenous, predominantly live in remote and inaccessible hilly and forest regions, maintaining a distinct culture that isolates them from mainstream society [23]. These communities exhibit significant variations in socio-economic factors, customs, rituals, food habits, language, and parenting styles compared to others [24]. Article 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution states Scheduled Tribes (ST) are groups recognized under Article 342 as Scheduled Tribes. Despite making up 8.6% of India's population, STs are often marginalized, with West Bengal's ST population at 5.8%, including 7.8% in rural and 1.5% in urban areas [Census Report, Govt. of India, 2011]. The unique cultural identities and complex social structures of tribal students, coupled with isolation, can lead to communication challenges and adjustment issues in schools, setting them apart from the broader society and contributing to feelings of aloofness. As secondary school marks a crucial phase of physical and mental growth for these students, their SA becomes paramount during this period [23]. They had more anxiety and adjustment issues than non-tribal students [24], and many lacked life skills.

Studies revealed several family [25,26] and school [26] related factors influence SA of school students, such as child nourishment, peer groups, economic conditions, caste systems, emotions, health,

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language, culture, education, behavior, morality, parenting factors [27,28,29,30,31]. Raju and Rhamtulla maintained parental occupation, caste, and gender are prominent among these factors [32]. Additionally, researchers have delved into the disparities in SA among tribal students, particularly examining family dynamics. Family dynamics encompass interactions shaped by individual traits, roles, culture, and external factors, impacting decision-making, conflict resolution, and emotions. These dynamics involve family type, parental backgrounds, income, siblings, collectivism, elder guidance, cultural values, economic implications, gender roles, parental involvement, language, cultural identities, community support, community resilience, etc. In tribal communities, as in others, these dynamics notably impact children's and students' interactions, relationships, and adjustment. These dynamics or factors also greatly influence the SA of tribal secondary-level students, affecting self-esteem, communication skills, and overall social competence [32]. Das and Deb discovered gender-based divergence in SA among tribal adolescents [19], and Jain and Yadav echoed this theme, emphasizing the relevance of gender in understanding adjustment dynamics [33]. These studies shed light on the multifaceted nature of SA among tribal students, considering various socio-demographic factors and gender-related nuances. Understanding and addressing these family-related influences is vital for promoting the well-being and SA of tribal secondary-level students [33]. Recognizing this complexity is essential for educators, counselors, and policymakers, as it affects academic performance, social development, and life outcomes, with family dynamics exhibiting substantial variation even within the same cultural or socio-economic context.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Investigation of SA among students, a compilation of studies reveals diverse findings. Das and Deb documented noteworthy differences in SA between tribal and non-tribal students in Tripura [19]. Akhtar underscored more pronounced adjustment-related issues among tribal students [24]. Auni et al., scrutinized Kenya's secondary school guidance and counseling programs, linking ineffective strategies to poor SA [34]. Kirtania explored 202 higher secondary students from West Bengal, noting the negligible impact of caste and parental factors on SA [Kirtania. P. (2019). Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation]. Osa-Edoh and Iyamu revealed that well-adjusted students perform better academically [35].

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Chauhan and Taviyadi and Patel identified gender-based differences among higher secondary students in SA [36,37]. Ganai and Mir found no gender-based differences in adjustment [38]. Yellaiah noted gender-based disparities in emotional, social, and educational adjustment, while Basu identified better adjustment among female, joint family, and English medium students [39,22]. Gehlawat found no significant difference in the emotional, social, and educational adjustment of boys and girls in secondary school [40]. It was found that male school students differ significantly in SA compared to female adolescents [37,17,18,39]. On the other hand, Muneer studied 350 tribal residential school students in Kerala and revealed that gender does not significantly affect SA [41].

Patial and Patial revealed various factors influence SA, such as motivational values, goals, past experiences, conflicts, frustrations, ego status, coping patterns like compromise, withdrawal, and attack, defense mechanisms, and attitudes that can be goal-directed, problem-solving, or self-centered [16]. Acharya examined 316 tribal girls from Odisha's Aspirational Districts, discovering significant disparities in SA across various socio-economic strata [42]. Tahir et al. (2022) found a strong link between the home environment and the SA of secondary school students in Kashmir [17]. Packiaselvi and Malathi found no significant differences in SA concerning mother tongue, gender, school location, family type, parents' educational qualifications, occupations, and monthly parental income [18]. Ghatak and Yellaiah reported no significant difference in SA between urban and rural adolescents [15,39].

The analysis of the related studies showed collectively that these studies emphasize the multifaceted nature of SA of school students influenced by gender, socio-economic status, counseling interventions, etc. Still, research has yet to explore how SA is affected by family dynamics among tribal students. Therefore, the present study aims to provide significant insights into the SA abilities of ST students in secondary school settings through a comprehensive analysis of family dynamics considering key variables such as gender, type of family, number of siblings, father's education and occupation, and family income. This investigation aims to determine if there are any significant variations in SA among ST students based on their family dynamics. Based on the objectives above, some null hypotheses were formulated for evaluation, which contend that there is no significant difference in the SA of ST students

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based on their family dynamics, including gender, type of family, number of siblings, father's education and occupation, and family income.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

The study participants were ST students in Class VIII to X. They were 13 to 17 years old. For this study, the researchers followed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the SA patterns of randomly selected 310 students (114 girls and 196 boys) from Panskura-I, Panskura-II, and Tamluk subdivision of Purba Medinipur District in the state of West Bengal, India.

3.2 Measures

In this study, the researchers used a personal information sheet and the Bell's Adjustment Inventory (BAIo) of R. K. Ojha [43]. The original version of the BAIo was in English and had four sub-scales (Home Adjustment, Health Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Emotional Adjustment) with 35 items each. For this study, only the SA sub-scale was used, which was translated and adapted into Bengali culture through a pilot study on a smaller representative group by Mohakud and Kirtania (2015). Based on experts' judgment and content validity, they considered only 15 items of this sub-scale for the final data collection measure. All the items had two options (Yes or No), with a score of 1 for 'Yes' and 0 for 'No'. A higher score on this scale indicates higher difficulty in adjustment and consequently lower social adjustment, and vice versa.

3.3 The Procedure of Data Collection

The researchers administered a cross-sectional survey among the participants to measure their social adjustment abilities. At first, the researchers identified the target population and then prepared a list of the target population. After that, the researcher selected some representative population groups using the mentioned sampling procedure. The researchers then visited the participants, explaining the purpose of the research and all legal research procedures and asking for voluntary participation. When they agreed, the researchers instructed the procedures clearly and then administered the personal information sheet

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and the Social Adjustment Sub-Scale. They organized the filled-in instruments for further screening and scoring after the survey and stored the data in an Excel worksheet on the personal computer for final analysis. Finally, the researchers used descriptive statistics, such as Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation (SD), to analyze the data. They used independent sample t-test and One-Way ANOVA in SPSS to test hypotheses.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A set of data is normal if the Skewness (Sk) and Kurtosis (Ku) are zero (0) and .263, respectively. However, in social sciences, it is rare to find the same. Therefore, social science researchers empirically set a range to consider data normality. In the present study, the distribution of SA scores among the participants is considered normal as the Sk is .601 with a Standard Error (SE) of .175 and the Ku is -.678 with a SE of .348. which lies within the range considered by Curran et al. (Sk < 2, Ku < 7) and Kline (Sk < 3, Ku < 10) [44,45].

4.1 Gender, Family Type and Social Adjustment

The mean score of SA for females is higher than for males (see table 1), which means female students had higher adjustment difficulty and lower SA than their counterparts. The mean difference is -1.44. Further, the independent samples t-test result revealed that the difference is statistically significant (p=.000<0.01). It means male and female tribal students differ significantly regarding their SA, and female students had lower SA than males. This finding is corroborated by Deb and Walsh; Tripathy and Sahu; Roy, Hossain, and Shithee; Taviyad and Patel; Tahir et al.; Ghatak, and Yellaiah [46,47,48,37,17,15,39], however, it contradicts the findings of Gehlawat; Rehman and Singh; Raju and Rahamtulla [40,49,32]. These findings confirm the traditional gender stereotypes.

While the type of family was the concern, the analysis revealed that the mean score of SA for students from nuclear families is higher than those from joint families, meaning students from nuclear families had more incredible adjustment difficulty and lower SA than students from nuclear families. The mean difference is -1.37. Further, the independent samples t-test result revealed that the difference is statistically significant (*P*=.000<0.01). It means ST students from nuclear and joint families differ

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significantly regarding their SA, and students from nuclear families had lower SA than those from joint families. This finding is in line with the results of Akpan-Idiok and Ackley; Rehman and Singh; Roy, Hossain, and Shithee; Tripathy and Sahu Dey and Sultana [50,49,48,47,51]. However, the results of Sharma; Rani and Khajuria; Bhungaria and Kaji, and Sahar and Muzaffar contradicted this finding [52,53,54,55].

This research delves into the nuanced dynamics of SA among ST students, uncovering gender-based and family-based differences that have implications for their educational experiences. The findings not only shed light on the unequal SA opportunities for male and female students and those from different family types but also provide insights into traditional gender stereotypes and familial influences within the tribal educational context.

Table 1. Gender and family type-wise comparison of SA

		N	Mean	SD	MD	SE_M	t	df	*P*
Gender	Male	196	6.20	2.28	-1.44	.16266	-5.528	308	.000*
	Female	114	7.64	2.10		.19667			
Type of family	Joint	111	5.86	2.29	-1.37	.2168	-5.214		.000*
	Nuclear	199	7.22	2.19		.1553			

4.2 Number of Siblings and Social Adjustment

When we compared the mean scores of SA concerning the number of siblings among the ST students, the analysis revealed that the students having two siblings face the highest adjustment difficulty; consequently, they have the lowest SA, followed by having one sibling, single child, and the students having more than three siblings face lowest adjustment difficulty hence highest SA. Further, the ANOVA result revealed that the variances among the groups are statistically significant (P=.025<0.05), and the differences lie between having one sibling and having more than three siblings (P=.023), and between having two siblings and having more than three siblings (P=.006). That means the number of siblings plays a significant role in determining the SA pattern of ST students. This outcome echoes earlier research by Sonawat, emphasizing the substantial influence of family size on students' SA abilities within

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tribal contexts [56]. Understanding this relationship can inform targeted interventions to improve the social well-being of tribal students in their educational experiences.

Table 2. The comparison of SA mean scores concerning the number of siblings

Number of Siblings	N	Mean	df	F	*P*
Single Child	47	6.47	3	3.15	.025
Having one Sibling	74	7.01			
Having Two Siblings	102	7.12			
More Than Three Siblings	87	6.18			
Total	310	6.73			

4.3 Fathers' Occupation and Social Adjustment

Concerning the students' SA based on their father's occupation, the analysis revealed that the tribal students whose fathers are businessmen face the most severe adjustment difficulty and consequently lowest SA, followed by the labourer, agriculture, others, service, and lowest adjustment difficulty and therefore highest SA for the tribal students, whose fathers are drives. Further, the ANOVA results revealed the variances among the groups are statistically significant (P=.04<0.04). The differences lie between agriculture and driver (P=.009), business and driver (P=.005), and labour and driver (P=.009). That means fathers' occupation significantly influences the SA of the tribal students.

This finding aligns with Yeo et al. [57], but contradicts Raju and Rahamtulla [32]. These results highlight the importance of considering socio-economic factors, such as paternal occupation, for tailored support systems and improved SA among tribal students.

Table 3. The comparison of SA mean scores concerning fathers' occupations

Father's Occupation	N	Mean	df	F	*P*
Agriculture	161	6.86			
Service	33	6.24			

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Business	20	7.50	5/297	2.36	.04
Labour	45	7.07			
Driver	28	5.61			
Others	16	6.69			
Total	303	6.74			

4.4 Fathers' Educational Qualification and Social Adjustment

Table 4 shows the SA of tribal students concerning their fathers' educational qualifications. The tribal students whose father's educational qualification is Class XI and above face the highest adjustment difficulty, meaning they have the lowest SA, followed by Class IV, Illiterate. On the other hand, students whose father's educational qualification is between Class-V to Class-X face the lowest adjustment difficulty, which means the highest SA. Further, the ANOVA result revealed the variances in mean scores are statistically significant (*P*=.050). Additionally, the multiple comparisons through the LSD test showed that the differences lie between illiterate and Class-XI and Above (*P*=.010), up to Class-V and Class-XI and Above (*P*=.026), and Class-V to X and Class-XI and Above (*P*=.010).

These findings align with prior research [32], potentially reflecting complexities linked to higher levels of fathers' education that influence social and educational expectations. Addressing these patterns requires tailored interventions based on paternal educational backgrounds, considering factors contributing to students' social adjustment. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for devising effective strategies to enhance the well-being and SA of tribal students.

Table 4. Mean comparison of SA based on fathers' educational qualifications

Father's educational qualification	N	Mean	df	F	*P*
Illiterate	121	6.60	3/306	2.638	.050
Up to Class-IV	52	6.62			
Class-V to X	99	6.57			

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Class-XI and Above	38	7.71			
Total	310	6.73			

4.5 Familial Income and Social Adjustment

When we focused on the SA of the tribal students concerning their familial monthly income, our analysis revealed that students belonging to the Rs. 6001/- to Rs. 12000/- familial monthly income group face the highest adjustment difficulty; consequently, they have lowest SA, followed by up to Rs. 3000/- income group, Rs. 3001/- to Rs. 6000/- income group and lowest adjustment difficulty and higher SA for above Rs. 12000/- income groups. Further, the ANOVA result revealed that the variances in SA among the income groups are statistically insignificant (*P*=.134>0.05), and SA does not vary significantly based on students' familial monthly income.

However, the multiple comparisons through the LSD test revealed a statistically significant difference in social adjustment between up to 3000 and above 12000 income groups (*P*=.039) and between 6001 to 9000 and above 12000 income groups (*P*=.006). These differences may arise due to sampling fluctuations. No study was found to support this finding. However, the results of Desai and Kulkarni contradicted this finding [58]. These findings emphasize the importance of considering socio-economic factors when understanding social adjustment among tribal students, suggesting that the association might be more nuanced than a simple linear relationship. However, the potential influence of sample fluctuations on the observed differences underscores the need for a cautious interpretation of these significant variations. Further research and a larger, more diverse sample might be necessary to confirm or refine these findings.

Table 5. The comparison of SA mean score concerning familial income

Monthly Income	N	Mean	df	F	*P*
Up to Rs. 3000/-	187	6.8235			
Rs.3001/- to Rs.6000/-	71	6.7183			
Rs. 6001/- to Rs.12000/-	17	7.3529	3	1.874	.134

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Above Rs. 12000/-	35	5.9429			
Total	310	6.7290			

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the intricate dynamics of social adjustment among Scheduled Tribe students in secondary school settings. The research delved into the influences of gender, family type, number of siblings, father's education and occupation, and family income on the social adjustment abilities of these students. The study revealed noteworthy findings through a comprehensive analysis that shed light on the nuanced factors shaping tribal students' social adjustment experiences. The analysis of gender-based differences unveiled that female tribal students exhibited higher adjustment difficulties and lower social adjustment than their male counterparts. This discrepancy aligns with prior research while challenging specific opposing findings.

Moreover, the influence of family type emerged as a significant factor, indicating that students from nuclear families faced greater adjustment challenges and lower SA than those from joint families. This result concurred with some studies while diverging from others. Exploring the effects of family size on social adjustment, the study found that students with two siblings faced the most significant adjustment difficulties and displayed lower social adjustment. This outcome resonates with earlier research, reinforcing the role of family structure in students' social well-being. Similarly, the influence of the fathers' occupations and educational qualifications on SA was evident, highlighting the complexity of socio-economic factors in shaping students' adjustment abilities. The investigation into familial monthly income indicated that while overall differences were not statistically significant, specific pairwise comparisons demonstrated variations. These findings underscore the multifaceted relationship between socio-economic status and social adjustment among tribal students.

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This study contributes to a deeper understanding of social adjustment dynamics among Scheduled Tribe students, revealing the significance of gender, family dynamics, socio-economic factors, and their interactions in shaping students' social adjustment experiences. It is unwise to generalize these findings; however, further large-scale and in-depth research is required. The implications of these findings extend

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to the development of customised interventions and support systems that address the unique needs of tribal students within the educational context.

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